

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

FEBRUARY 2008

FOUR DOLLARS





G. Michael Bise

Acting Director

## Adaptive Wildlife Management: Merging the Then with the Now

The history of hunting in Virginia is as old as the history of Virginia herself and can clearly be traced back to the first English settlers in the New World. Turns out these newcomers were only doing what the native Virginians had done for thousands of years, that is, use the bounty of Virginia's wildlife for food, shelter, tools, clothes and indeed, recreation. These early hunters, both native and come-here, valued wildlife and the opportunities it provided. It was only hundreds of year later, after the face of Virginia had changed dramatically, that this long accepted practice of using wildlife for personal benefit changed.

That change occurred in 1916, with the creation of what is now the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The unrestricted harvest of wildlife and the market hunting of certain species had driven the populations of some animals to a dangerously low level. Deer and wild turkey, those species so common and important when the English arrived, and so abundant today, were virtually non-existent in some areas of the Commonwealth.

With this new department came new laws governing the way we interact with wildlife, particularly on the consumptive use side of the equation, resulting in a new way to look at hunting. The key to the success of this new way of managing wildlife was the end user—the hunter, angler and trapper. It just so happened that the value of wildlife so apparent to the early hunters was shared just as fervently by the hunters in the “new” Virginia. These folks willingly bought licenses, and a bit later paid excise taxes on firearms, ammunition and other similar gear. The revenue generated by this new way of doing business provided the desperately needed funds to begin the intense wildlife management practices that have brought the results we value and enjoy in Virginia.

Anyone who appreciates the wildlife abundance we have today, whether your interest is hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife watching in all its forms, or simply knowing that the “wild” Vir-



ginia is alive and well, owes a big thank you to the proud tradition of hunting in Virginia, and to those passionate, dedicated folks who continue this tradition.

But as we know they will, things continue to change. In 2006, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries hosted the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) Conference. SEAFWA is made up of all the states in the southeastern U.S. and is one of the longest serving such organizations of its kind. The focus of this group is to seek common solutions to common problems related to all the variables of managing wildlife resources. The theme of the SEAFWA conference was “Managing Wildlife in the Next New World.” The one recognition by all the participants in the conference was that the faces of all our states have changed. Consequently, the way we manage wildlife, and the activities so vital to this management, such as hunting, fishing and trapping, need to be in tune with this new world and must be preserved. Now, just as in 1916, we need to carefully balance the new Virginia and all the issues and concerns that Virginians, now some seven and a half million people, have regarding wildlife management.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is once again at the forefront of these new challenges. Loss of critical habitat, environmental degradation, human/wildlife conflicts, and a decline in areas available to hunt, fish, trap and otherwise enjoy wildlife are some of the apparent issues in the new Virginia that must be addressed.

Less obvious, but equally critical, are issues we as an agency deal with every day. We all remember the concerns in recent years related to the potential for a pandemic flu outbreak. Recall that the overriding concern was the mobility of people and how that contributes to the spreading of disease. Translate that concern to wildlife and you get an idea of one of the major challenges facing

*Director's Column continued on page 31*

### Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

*Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources*

Commonwealth of Virginia  
Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

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**About the Cover:** Snow geese (*Chen caerulescens*) are found throughout Virginia's coastal region. Fall migration brings thousands of snow geese to the Chesapeake Bay from October to December. Snow geese prefer abun-

dant emergent vegetation in brackish marshes and feed on them in early morning or late afternoon. Chincoteague NWR, Saxis WMA and Back Bay NWR are excellent locations to view snow geese in large numbers during their winter migrations. Photo by Ken Conger, [kenconger.smugmug.com](http://kenconger.smugmug.com)



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# Minnows AND Mussels

*Anglers and landowners are learning that sometimes little things can help provide new insight into the state's environmental health and the quality of its water.*

story and photos  
by Bruce Ingram



“Ah, there he is, that’s a very good sign,” exults Nathaniel “Than” Hitt, a graduate student in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences at Virginia Tech.

The scene behind our house on Catawba Creek in Botetourt County is a little surreal. Wearing a 35-pound electro shocking “backpack,” Hitt is wielding what looks like a long hoe with a circular metal object on the end of it, but what is really a device that sends an electric current into a localized section of the creek. Behind Hitt, my son Mark stands ready with a net to scoop up any dazed denizens that float to the surface. Once Mark corrals the critter, he deposits it into an aerated white bucket on the stream bank

*Clad in waders and rubber boots, which protects them from receiving a shock, Virginia Tech student, Nathaniel Hitt, and the author's son, Mark Ingram, prepare to sample Catawba Creek for minnows, darters, sculpins and other fish species.*





*Swift running water with a rocky bottom is an excellent place to prospect for minnows. Certain fish are indicator species in that their presence or absence has repercussions for larger game fish. Below: a margined madtom.*

where later, Than will identify and number the species before releasing it.

The “he” that Hitt is so excited to capture is a longfin darter (*Etheostoma longimanum*), an indicator species for the upper James River basin. Simply stated, if the stream conditions are such that this darter exists in good numbers, chances are that small-mouth bass, for example, are also present in good numbers. Conversely, if habitat conditions deteriorate and the longfin darter starts to disappear, the odds are that the fishing will soon become worse as game fish will no longer be able to reproduce and survive in sufficient numbers.

“In the upper James River Basin, species such as the longfin darter, mountain redbelly dace, and long-nose dace serve as an early warning system,” explains Hitt, as he releases the longfin back into the creek. “For example, some fish species require clean gravels for spawning and cannot tolerate sedimentation. When those species disappear, that could forecast declines in species that are somewhat more tolerant of sediment, such as smallmouth bass. Even the

smallest minnows, darters, suckers and sculpins can tell us something important about the quality of our streams, if we know how to listen.”

A new program of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) aims to help with that listening. DEQ’s Probabilistic Monitoring Program (called ProbMon) was initiated in 2001 to assess the status of the Commonwealth’s streams and rivers using invertebrates found in the stream. Currently, Hitt is working with his advisor, Dr. Paul Angermeier, to incorporate stream fish into the ProbMon program as a pilot project.

“Stream fish provide new insight about environmental quality because they have unique habitat requirements,” Hitt explains. “And because some species can move long distances, they may help us better understand the status of entire watersheds.”



### The Watersheds and Some of the Species Targeted For Protection:

- ❖ Upper Tennessee Drainage (31 species of endangered mussels, yellowfin madtom)
- ❖ Lower New River (candy darter, hellbender)
- ❖ Upper Roanoke River (Roanoke logperch, orange fin madtom, Atlantic pigtoe)
- ❖ Upper James River and Rivanna River (James spiny mussel, Atlantic pigtoe)





## Indicator Fish Species in Virginia

"Stream fish can provide a wealth of information about environmental quality and sport fishing opportunities," says Than Hitt. "Although quite diverse in their appearance and behavior, several stream fish share strict requirements for high-quality habitats. As a result, these species indicate environmental quality and provide an 'early warning system' to avoid future sport fish declines.

The following are examples of freshwater indicator fish from the major basins in the Old Dominion. Look for these fish as good signs of environmental quality and sport fishing in your watershed. For pictures of these fish, visit [www.cnr.vt.edu/efish](http://www.cnr.vt.edu/efish).

### James River basin

Longfin darter (*Etheostoma longimanum*)  
Torrent sucker (*Thoburnia rhotoca*)

### New River basin

Candy darter (*Etheostoma osburni*)  
Tonguetied minnow (*Exoglossum laurae*)

### Potomac River basin

Northern hogsucker (*Hypentelium nigricans*)  
Slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*)

### Roanoke River basin

Orange fin madtom (*Noturus gilberti*)  
Roanoke logperch (*Percina rex*)

### Tennessee River basin

Blotched chub (*Erimystax insignis*)  
Gilt darter (*Percina evides*)



## In Search of the James Spiny mussel

Several weeks later, I am standing in Johns Creek, a Craig County tributary of Craig Creek, which in turn flows into the James River. Johns is typical of many tributaries of the James in western Virginia; it features trout in its headwaters, and small-mouth bass, rock bass, redbreast sunfish and fall fish throughout most of its length. Next to me is Brian Watson, a wildlife diversity biologist, and Melanie Stine, biologist assistant, both from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Forest office. We are searching for a specific species of mussel that may live in a section of creek that borders land I own.

"Johns Creek is a high priority area for the DGIF Landowner Incentive Program since it has the best known population of the endangered James spiny mussel," says Watson. "Mussels are excellent indicators of water quality, because as filter feeders they process what is in the water. Just like the canary in a coal mine, they can be the first indicator of a potential water quality problem. If the James spiny mussel starts to disappear, we could see a decline in the trout population and that disappearance could eventually be seen in other fish populations like small-mouth and sunfish, as well.

"Water quality and habitat degradation are the primary reasons for the decline of freshwater mussels. It is not uncommon for anglers to comment that mussels used to be more prevalent in streams where there has been a decline in fishing quality. There is a link here and the mussels are trying to tell us there is a problem: we only need to listen. The spiny mussel is typically more sensitive to water quality changes and habitat alterations than other mussel species so their decline should be an early warning signal."

I have high hopes that we will find the spiny mussel in the stretch of creek that runs through my land. I have fished this section of Johns



Brian Watson, Department wildlife diversity biologist, searched the section of Johns Creek bordering the author's land for the James spiny mussels. Johns Creek is one of the last strongholds for this mussel. Below left: a longfin darter.

Creek since 1970 and owned it since 1983. As Watson positions his green "view bucket" with its plexi-glass bottom on the creek's surface so that he can scan the bottom and Stine dons snorkeling gear so that she can creep along the substrate, I find myself passionately hoping that they will locate a spiny mussel, just as many times I have fished the stream passionately hoping to catch small-mouths.

My land is not just a place for me to fish and hunt on, but a place for me to be a good steward. And I have come to realize that how I treat this little postage stamp of property does matter to all those who live downstream.



## New Program Available For Landowners

One of the best things landowners along waterways can do to improve stream habitat for nongame and game species is to become involved in the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), says Louise Finger, a DGIF stream restoration biologist.

"The DGIF administers the federally-funded LIP that provides 75 percent cost-share on a voluntary basis to private landowners for protection and/or restoration of streams in target watersheds that contain threatened, endangered, or at-risk aquatic species," says Finger. "The goal of this program is to protect, restore or enhance habitat for rare, aquatic species.

"Within these watersheds, protecting the headwater streams is of the highest importance. LIP practices employed to protect and enhance water quality and aquatic habitat include livestock fencing, alternative watering source development, riparian buffer planting, bank stabilization, and stream restoration. These practices reduce bank erosion, stream sedimentation, and nutrients in runoff. They also improve wildlife habitat in the riparian corridor and aquatic habitat within the stream channel itself by providing cover, shade and food."



Brian and Melanie search for several hours but cannot locate a single James spiny mussel. They do encounter shells of the Eastern elliptio (the most common mussel on the Atlantic slope), Atlantic pigtoe (state threatened and relatively rare throughout Virginia), and that omnipresent invader, the Asian clam (which seems to be everywhere). Brian can tell I am dispirited.

"Sometimes it may take four or five trips to a stream section before we can find a spiny mussel," he consoles. "Your riparian buffer and water quality look good. On the other hand, your stream habitat of bedrock and cobble is not conducive to finding a spiny mussel. It typically thrives in flowing areas with stable pebble, sand and gravel, which is lacking on your property.

"However, you should know that your healthy riparian buffer is a plus for the James spiny mussel and game fish downstream."

Like a trout fisherman who knows he has a honey hole he can always count on, Watson then proclaims that he can drive us to a place upstream that is "guaranteed" to contain spiny mussels.

"Recently, we found over 80 there in a little 20-yard stretch," he exults.

Two minutes after arriving, Brian corrals a creeper, a species relatively uncommon in the James Watershed. But a minute or so later, Melanie surfaces, displaying a wide grin. In her hand is a James spiny mussel.

I am as excited as if I had just caught a 4-pound smallmouth from the James, and I take pictures of the creature. Then Stine carefully returns the spiny mussel to the same place she found it, just as I would have released a smallmouth. The fate of the two species is related, you know, and minnows and mussels do mean more to fishermen than imaginable. □

*Bruce Ingram is the author of the newly released Fly and Spin Fishing for River Smallmouths. For more information on how to obtain a copy write to Bruce Ingram, P.O. Box 429, Fincastle, VA 24090."*



*All smiles, Melanie Stine, biologist assistant, displays the James spiny mussel that she found while on Johns Creek. This mussel is a crucial indicator species for game fish. Below left: a James spiny mussel.*

## Contact information

Three DGIF Stream Restoration Biologists work directly with landowners to identify and implement the practices appropriate to each site. These biologists are based out of the Verona, Forest and Marion offices.

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(276) 783-4860



# MEADOWWOOD DOESN'T

*It's time to saddle up  
and visit one of Northern  
Virginia's most unique  
historical and  
recreational resources.*

by Marika Byrd

**L**ocated 25 miles from Washington, D. C., Meadowood is 800 acres of rolling, unfenced farmland and meadowland surrounded by forest. Meadowood is part of Mason Neck, in Fairfax, Virginia, which contains the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge (U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service); Mason Neck State Park (Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation) and Pohick Bay Regional Park (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority). Also nearby is Gunston Hall, home of George Mason, IV, writer of the Virginia Bill of Rights.

Through a complex set of land transactions, facilitated by Fairfax County and congressional legisla-

tion, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was allowed to acquire the property on October 18, 2001. Ultimately, Meadowood Farm was acquired by BLM in exchange for federally owned land at the recently closed Lorton Correctional Complex.

Although many people in the East have never heard of BLM, this agency manages more public property than any other federal agency, and nearly as much as all the other Federal agencies combined.

*Meadowood Farm is part of Mason Neck, a wildlife oasis of more than 6,000 acres. It is within a 20 minute drive of Washington, D.C. where the public can view a variety of wildlife species, such as white-tailed deer, waterfowl and songbirds.*

Mike Ferguson, Acting Deputy Director at BLM, declared at the October 14, 2006, dedication that, "The Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area is a showcase for public land management for the pub-



©BLM



©BLM



# FENCE YOU IN



*The Bureau of Land Management, best known for managing large tracks of land in the western part of the United States, acquired Meadowood Farm through a unique land exchange agreement.*



lic in and around the D. C. area. This is the first opportunity for BLM to manage surface lands in the national capital region and play a key role in providing public recreational opportunities and open spaces in areas which are threatened by urban sprawl.

The future use of Meadowood is for public recreation, environmental education, wild horse and burro adoptions, and other public purposes, according to Terry Lewis, Chief of External Affairs at BLM's Eastern States Office. "Citizens of the area who were interested in protecting the resources of the site were very instrumental in shaping the process; Meadowood is worth protecting."

## RECREATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES

Ferguson said that Belmont House and the Meadowood trails provide the site for many environmental education programs conduct-

*Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area is one of the first locations in Northern Virginia where the BLM has taken an active role in managing and developing a public recreational site.*

ed through local schools, youth groups and the Wonderful Outdoor World. Belmont House, a former farmhand residence, located on Old Colchester Road off Gunston Road, has been turned into the environmental education center. Currently the facility is not fully handicapped accessible, though it does have a ramp to the front door entrance.

BLM is looking to partner with and bring in non-profit, environmental education groups to run programs and make better use of this property. The target areas are small school groups, teacher training, adult programming, etc. One partner who has expressed interest is the Northern Virginia Audubon Society, which teaches naturalists.

The property is split into two lots: Meadowood West is located at 10207 Old Colchester Road and contains the Wood Thrush Trailhead along with the Environmental Educational Center. The other section is off Gunston Road and contains the Mustang Trailhead.

With the help of dedicated volunteers, BLM has created a variety of horse trails and they are creating biking trails throughout for use by the public. Eventually the trails will connect with the Mason Neck State Park and the Pohick Bay Regional Park. Future parking lots are planned at the trail heads to encourage and allow more access by the visiting public to enjoy the environs. The stable has contracted management and boarders pay to leave their horses onsite, according to Lewis.

The rolling farmland gives plenty of open space for an assortment of activities which visitors can do on their own or join with other groups to enjoy the outdoors. Go fly a hand-line controlled model airplane or kite as spring begins blossoming with renewed growth; when summer is in full radiance enjoy a family picnic or fishing if that be your forte; when Mother Nature shows her fall colors and prepares for a deep sleep go take a hike or ride your horse. Winter is a good time for cross-country skiing, taking hikes in the crisp air and (hopefully) snow-covered territory or just walk the property to enjoy the



abundance of wildlife. Those wide, open spaces are there.

Fishing is good at Meadowood. Electroshocking is done periodically to check the pond population and determine what needs to be stocked. There are good size catfish and bass, says Lewis. Crappie and sunfish can be found at the two ponds on the property. Creel limits are posted. And if the fish aren't biting, you can be entertained by the numerous dragonflies zooming over the ponds.

Because of the high browse line, BLM is working with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to consider a deer hunt plan so that the population at Meadowood will not damage the vegetation, and they also want to prevent disease in the abundant herd on the property.

Lewis articulated that habitat is provided for migratory and resident waterfowl; such as nesting, feeding and roosting habitat for blue herons and wood ducks, screech owls, bluebirds and tree frogs. At the Enchanted Pond you will find dragonfly species, butterflies and a variety of other insect species. Additionally, you might see foxes, turtles, deer, turkeys and dozens of bird species that live or pass through the property. Enhancements are planned for wildlife diversity.

The surrounding forest includes various oaks, hickories, beech, persimmons and pine. The rolling farmland meadows are mowed and the forest edges are left for animal feeding areas.

## MEADOWOOD'S CHALLENGES

Jeff McCusker, a BLM Recreation Planner stationed at the Meadowood property said, "One of the biggest challenges for BLM will be to mesh the interests of the conservationists, naturalists, hunters, anglers, wildlife watchers, horseback riders, and others to get all to respect sometimes

competing uses. Sudden loud noises can be scary for the horses, and all riders, trail walkers and bikers need to respect other users when on the trails, as they are all using the same property. Currently there is 80 percent usage by equestrians, and BLM wishes to accommodate other users," he said.

McCusker added that another great challenge at Meadowood is fitting the recreational demands their market serves. BLM aims to highlight the activities available and get the public interested in using the facilities. There will be a tie-in with Mason Neck and the Pohick Bay Regional Park, and efforts will be made to make this a multiple-usage area with all of the properties. More of those wide, open spaces.

Currently there are no user fees attached to activities at Meadowood.

## WILD HORSE AND BURRO ADOPTION PROGRAM

Since 2004, BLM has conducted an annual wild horse and burro adoption at Meadowood. Lewis explained that these animals are unbranded, unclaimed, absolutely wild and free-roaming horses or burros

*Volunteers assist with maintaining hiking and horseback riding trails.*

found on public lands in various western states.

These wild horses and burros are descendants of animals that were released by or escaped from Spanish explorers, ranchers, miners, the U.S. Cavalry and American Indians. A colony of wild horses resides along the Virginia and North Carolina borders of the Outerbanks, but these are not managed by the BLM.

With little fencing, the animals roamed the plains freely until ranchers, hunters and 'mustangers' ... indiscriminately rounded them up on the range lands and sold them for commercial purposes in the 1950s.



*The Wild Horse and Burro Adoption Program at Meadowood Farm has helped to educate people about the plight of these wild animals and their efforts to find them good homes.*



Enter Wild Horse Annie, formally known as Velma Bonn Johnston. Wild Horse Annie led a grass roots campaign, involving mostly school children. She exposed the inhumane treatment of the mustangs, which outraged the public and ultimately got them fully engaged in the issue. Newspapers published articles about the exploitation of wild horses and burros, and as noted in a July 15, 1959, Associated Press article, "seldom has an issue touched such a responsive chord."

Congressman Walter Baring helped to push through the 1971 Act—Public Law 92-195 Wild Free-

strawberry roans, appaloosas, chestnuts, bays and burros, were brought east for the October 2006 event. Since the adoption of wild horses and burros began in 1973, more than 200,000 animals have been adopted into private care nationwide, says Lewis. The October 14-15, 2006, event saw 36 of 42 animals (brought in from Nevada) adopted over the two days. BLM conducts adoptions in almost every state, so check the BLM web site for future adoption dates.

The animals are thoroughly checked and only healthy horses or burros are placed for adoption (a minimum adoption fee of \$125.00 is

realize the same goal for these wild animals.

Lewis stated that education and awareness about the intelligence and trainability of wild horses and burros is the key to public acceptance of these amazing animals. Recently BLM has developed an educational demonstration geared towards both informing people that wild horses and burros must be gathered because they are overpopulating western range lands, and demonstrating how they have been trained to be exceptional mounts for all types of equine events.

Lewis continued, "These wild horses can be trained for many uses: champions in dressage, jumping, barrel racing, endurance racing and pleasure riding. Wild burros excel in driving, packing, riding, guarding and as companion animals. Both wild horses and burros are known for their sure-footedness, strength, intelligence and endurance. Think of the Grand Canyon tours where some of these animals are used.

It was fascinating to learn that some adopted animals were tamed by youth groups and then used in a Presidential Inauguration Parade in Washington, D. C. Other adopted horses have been used in the Arlington Cemetery caisson unit, said Lewis.

Have you fenced yourself in by working all the time, going to many social or scheduled family events? Gather your family, some loved ones and plan a trip to Meadowood. Pack some nourishing food and go enjoy the environs at this recreational facility before it becomes so well known that the crowds flock there. □

*Marika Byrd is a freelance writer who lives in Glen Allen. She is also a member of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association, Inc.*

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burro Act  
[www.returntofreedom.org/kids/annie/html](http://www.returntofreedom.org/kids/annie/html)  
[www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/history.htm](http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov/history.htm)



***If you're looking for hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding or wildlife watching opportunities, make plans to visit Meadowood Farm and the whole Mason Neck Management Area this year.***

Roaming Horses and Burros Act (also known as the Wild Horse Annie Act).

The above-named act gave two federal agencies (BLM and Forest Service) the authority to manage, protect and control wild horses and burros on the nation's public lands in order to ensure healthy herds and healthy range lands."

Because of insufficient vegetation and water to sustain the increasing herds found in the western states, some wild horses and burros are humanely gathered and are made available at the auctions. Sorrels, pintos,

required). The public can view the animals up close and personal in their metal-gated pens while the adoptions are in progress.

The adoptions are not final until the owner has cared for their adopted equines for one year. BLM does face-to-face checks on the animal over the first adoption year. This ensures that they are properly cared for and not simply sent to the slaughterhouse or sold to someone else.

Ms. Connie Lundquist, of Seaford, Delaware, epitomizes the kind of adopter BLM seeks. She wants them to have good homes with caring owners; so, she purchased her fourth and fifth animal in 2006—two burros. She had to put one out to pasture with a retired race horse so they can live out their last days in comfort and leisure. Her adoptions help BLM



# Brant, Geese



*Atlantic Brant*

story and illustrations  
by Spike Knuth

**B**rant, geese and swans are usually associated with water and along with their close cousins the ducks, they are known as waterfowl and make up the family *Anatidae*.

There are six species of geese native to the United States including the snow geese, (greater, lesser and blue, a color phase), Ross geese, emperor

geese, white-fronted geese, brant (Atlantic and Pacific), and 11 races of Canada geese. There are two native species of swans; the trumpeter and the tundra swan, and one non-indigenous species, the mute swan. The species found in Virginia include the greater snow geese and blue geese, the Atlantic brant, Canada geese, tundra swan, and mute swan. Occasional or accidental migrants are the lesser snow geese and Ross geese.

These large, long-necked waterfowl are among the northernmost breeding birds in the world. Brant,

geese and swans mate for life, although they will re-mate if one is lost. They all build similar nests in the tundra, usually built up of vegetation and lined with down. For the brant, geese and swans, it is extremely important for nesting and incubation to succeed on the first try. The short Arctic summer prohibits second chances, and the hens will seldom attempt to re-nest if her first clutch is destroyed. Severe weather changes in their Arctic breeding grounds have prevented them from bringing off their broods successfully in a number of years.

Geese, swans and sometimes brant regularly feed in upland areas as well as on water, grazing on tender green shoots and seed heads of various grasses including wheat, sedges and other vegetation. They also feed on grains like corn and rice. Brant feed mainly on eel grass, sea lettuce, and other saltwater aquatic vegetation and swans will add mollusks and arthropods to their diets. All are capable of tipping up in the water to feed like ducks.

Sexes of these birds are similarly colored and they all fly in those fascinating V-shaped flocks or wavy strings and lines.

## Atlantic Brant (*Branta bernicla brota*)

The brant is a small sea goose, averaging about 3 pounds in weight, and is somewhat similar in coloration to the Canada goose. Its bill, head, neck and chest are black with a white neck patch that is streaked with black. The breast and belly are white with sides and flanks barred with dark gray-brown, and the back and upper wings a dark brown with primaries black.

In flight it has a rapid wing beat and a neck that is shorter than other



# and Swans of Virginia

geese. On the water, they ride buoyantly with neck tilted forward and head pointed down. As a flock, they fly in irregular lines or masses, with some trailing birds stringing out for some distance.

They leave the Eastern Shore and New Jersey coastline in February and March, with some birds delaying into April or even May. By mid-June they arrive to places like Baffin, Southampton and Ellesmere Islands and northern Greenland. They are usually paired up when they arrive. They nest on one of the many tiny islands scattered over the tidal flats close to the sea. The four to five creamy white eggs hatch in about three weeks. Hatched young fledge in 45-50 days.

Brant leave the Arctic in late-August, reaching the Jersey coast in October. They are circumpolar in their migrations. For example, a brant that may have wintered in Virginia one year may nest in Greenland and go to Europe to winter the next.

Brant populations have suffered declines since the 1930s with the disappearance of eel grass, the brant's main food, plus continued encroachment by man's activities. Recently brant began to adapt to using sea let-



*Greater Snow Goose*

tuce, widgeon grass, salt marsh grass, and in recent years even feeding in croplands and grasslands, especially when snow or ice covers their aquatic feeding grounds.

## Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Migrating flocks of Canada geese have thrilled and fascinated mankind for generations, signaling both the beginning of the season of growing and

its harvest time. As the flocks migrate, they stop at numerous marshes, lakes and refuges along the way where they rest and feed to strengthen themselves.

Here, around the Chesapeake Bay area, the Canada goose is a common sight. Virginia has many large coastal marshes and croplands adjacent to marshes and tidal rivers. Canada geese are grazing birds, preferring green shoots of grasses and, to the farmer's dismay, young, tender growths of wheat. When weather turns colder, they begin gleaning grains, especially corn, and sometimes soybeans.

*Canada Goose*







### *Greater Snow Goose*

The coming of warming temperatures induces them to begin their northward journeys, usually some time in February and March. The vast majority nest and rear their young in the Arctic tundra regions. They prefer to build their nest elevated so they can see the surrounding terrain and watch for approaching predators. Often they'll build atop a muskrat house or an old hawk or eagle nest, and will nest in man-made structures such as platforms, old tires and tubs.

From two to five white eggs are laid and incubation takes about 25 days. Both parents will aggressively protect eggs and young. After the young hatch, they are led to water close by and the adult birds begin their summer molt, losing their

power of flight for a short time. Canada geese feed on vegetable matter; roots of rushes, sedges, grasses, leaves, seeds and berries, with sand being consumed to aid in digestion.

There are a number of races of Canada geese, ranging in size from the 3 ½ pound Cackling goose to the Giant Canada goose which may go to 14 pounds. The intermediate sizes are most common ranging from 6 to 10 pounds and 35 to 43 inches in length.

When the birds are on the wing again, they move south traveling in family groups, a number of which make up a big V-shaped flock. While their flight seems heavy and labored, they are actually strong, swift flyers, and with a good tail wind can travel a thousand miles in 11-12 hours.

In more recent years there has been a population explosion of what are known as resident Canada geese. These birds, probably stem from Giant Canada stock, and are not migrants. They are with us all year round although some may migrate short distances mainly for feeding purposes. They have become somewhat of a pest in that they nest and gather on park ponds, fish hatcheries, golf courses, and airports, getting in the way, causing some damage, muddying ponds and lakes, and leaving excrement all over those areas. Despite all this, they look the same and their calls and flocks flying over the suburbs, while unnatural, still evokes a certain amount of excitement in the heart of a wildlife lover.

# Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!





## Greater Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens atlantica*)

One of the more spectacular sights in coastal Virginia is the arrival of wintering flocks of greater snow geese. These geese traditionally fly a narrow migrational corridor down the Atlantic Coast to winter in coastal marshes and fields from southern New Jersey south to North Carolina. Virginia's Eastern Shore is a favored area for them, especially the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and the coastal barrier islands that stretch southward on the seaside. Many snows winter farther south around Back Bay and Currituck Sound, and some go farther into North Carolina to the Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge.

Back in late-September to mid-October, nearly the whole Atlantic population of greater snows had gathered on the lower St. Lawrence River at Cap Tormente in the province of Quebec. They remain at this traditional staging area until November when they move south en-masse to the marshes of New Jersey,

Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina.

The greater snow goose is basically all white with black primary wing feathers. Some may confuse them with the tundra swan, but the tundra swan does not have black on its wings, and is much larger with an obviously longer neck. Often the heads of the snows are brushed with a light rust color. They have pink feet and bills; the bills having a black "grinning patch." Young-of-the-year snows are sooty or dusky gray with darker feet and bill.

On the water, snow geese sit high and buoyant in the water and carry their tail high. Their call is a dog-like barking described as "auk-auk" repeated often. From a distance a flock

of gabbling snows may actually sound like a pack of baying hounds. Close by, a large flock sets up an incredible din when they take off, sounding like a screaming crowd at a football stadium. Snows fly in overlapping rounded Vs and waving, ever-changing lines across the sky.

Snow geese favor feeding in areas that have a little standing water. They root and grub in the mud for roots and tender stems of mainly cordgrass and sedges. Often their heads are plastered with mud half way down their necks. This is what causes the rusty wash on their heads. They feed so heavily that certain areas turn into big mud holes with floating vegetation, feathers and droppings. So efficient are they at







*Tundra Swan*

feeding that these areas become devoid of vegetation and sometimes never recover. Because of this heavy rooting, much of its habitat on both its breeding and wintering grounds is being decimated, which affects other species as well. They are literally eating themselves out of house and home.

The snows will begin leaving Virginia in late-February and early-March. Once again they gather on the St. Lawrence River near the city of Quebec duplicating their fall migrational habit of staging there. Here they congregate in one gigantic flock to rest and feed before heading to their Arctic breeding grounds. The northern natives call the snows and blues "wavies," which is a corruption of the word "wa-wa," which means "wild goose" in their language.

Once on the nesting grounds in the marshy, grassy tundra, the female forms a hollow on the ground amid scrub willows or grasses. Anywhere from three to seven white eggs are laid around July 1. If nesting is successful, the young hatch about mid-July. They are led immediately to large Arctic ponds to feed on insects, berries, seeds, vegetation and mollusks. They grow rapidly in the long summer Arctic days, then move to more open seas to feed on mollusks and sea cabbage until early-September when they are almost full grown. In late-September the cycle begins anew.

### Lesser Snow Goose

*(Chen caerulescens caerulescens)*

The smaller lesser snow goose is more widespread and abundant than the greater and is found mainly in the Mississippi, Central and Pacific Flyways. Its colors are similar to the greater's. Their two main migrational paths are through the Mississippi Valley to the Arctic Coast and from California to northern Alaska. Mating, nesting and feeding habits are similar to the greater snows.

### Blue Goose

*(Chen caerulescens caerulescens)*

The blue goose was long thought to be a separate species. However, it is a color phase, especially the small-

er lesser snow goose. There are some snow/blue geese that are of the greater snow goose subspecies, but they make up less than 5 percent of the greater snow goose populations.

When the two interbreed, offspring are likely to be blue phase. Research has found that the gene responsible for producing the blue phase is dominant while the white gene is recessive. However, it has been noticed that lesser snows tend to choose mates of the same plumage color as their parents, which is apparently why the blue phase has not completely overtaken the white.

They have a white head and neck with some white on their underparts. The name comes from their bluish white wing coverts. Its body is main-



*Tundra Swan*



ly a dusky gray or brown. Its habits are similar to the other snow geese.

### Ross Goose (*Chen rossii*)

Ross goose is like a miniature snow goose. They have a small, more rounded head, a stubbier bill, and shorter neck. They lack the grinning patch on their bills. The feather line at the base of the bill is straight and vertical, not curved as on the greater or lesser snows. These geese nest in central northern Arctic Canada, and most migrate to the rich valleys of California. However, they are wanderers and occasionally show up in the Midwest and Atlantic, a trend that has been increasing as their populations increase. They will interbreed with the lesser snow geese.

### Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*)

This graceful giant of waterfowl attain average weights of about 15 pounds. Despite its size, the tundra swan is able to become airborne with ease by running over the surface of the water. When a flock takes off together, the "plop-plopping" of their big, black feet on the water makes considerable noise. When landing, they "parachute" down gracefully into the water.

Formerly known as the whistling swan, because their wings whistle in flight, their call is goose-like, but more melodious; a sort of a "who-whooping," rather than a honking. Some people often mistake the swan for a snow goose, but the tundra swan's long, outstretched neck makes up more than half its length, and lacks the black primary wing feathers. Young swans are a pale ashy-gray in late autumn with pinkish-gray feet and bills.

Tundra swans begin arriving to Virginia about mid-November. They fly in wedge-shaped or V-shaped flocks, or long diagonal lines, at great heights and have been seen by aircraft pilots at over 20,000 feet. Their journey takes them 4,000 miles from the Arctic to the Chesapeake Bay. They make only a few stops at tradi-

tional sites in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley regions.

They nest in lowlands dotted with ponds and small lakes, building a bulky nest of vegetation, and lay four to five eggs. The young hatch in late-June, early-July, and fledge by mid-September. Swans feed on tubers, leaves and seeds of aquatic vegetation, as well as mollusks and arthropods. On land they graze on various grasses and can cause damage to wheat by tromping down low wet areas in the fields with their vigorous feeding and large webbed feet.

### Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

This non-native species was introduced from Europe and Asia in the early 1900s for display in parks and zoos, and some private ponds. Many escaped captivity and bred.

ward, while its large tail is held at an upward angle. The may weigh up to 22 pounds.

Despite their graceful, almost elegant appearance, mute swans have become a pest species. They nest on small islands, marshy shores, or banks of lakes and ponds. But they defend large territories and will often dominate a whole lake or pond, attacking and chasing any other animals away.

In winter, they will move to salt or brackish water if their freshwater habitat freezes. Their numbers have been increasing substantially and have grown from a couple hundred in the 60s to 66,000 in 1991 and likely much higher by now. They are no longer protected and have pest status in many states. □

*Spike Knuth is an avid naturalist and wildlife artist. For over 30 years his artwork and writing have appeared in Virginia Wildlife. Spike is also a member of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association.*



*Mute Swan*

The resultant young, not being wing clipped, became free flying wild birds along the eastern coast from New England to Virginia.

Mute swans can be distinguished from tundra swan by its raised, fluffed up wings over its back and gracefully curved neck, while the tundra has a straight backed silhouette and its neck is held straight up. The mute swan glides over the water like a sailing ship and shows a bright orange bill with a black knob and base, and tends to point it down-

**Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!** is a regular feature that highlights Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan, which is designed to unite natural resources agencies, sportsmen and women, conservationists and citizens in a common vision for the conservation of the Commonwealth's wildlife and habitats in which they live. To learn more or to become involved with this new program visit:

[bewildvirginia.org](http://bewildvirginia.org).



*Women from around the Tidewater area joined together to learn more about their wild side and to test their outdoor skills*

story by John Streit  
photos by Ed Waterman

**I**t's a long, windy drive down Princess Anne Road from Virginia Beach's heavily populated areas before you reach the rural retreat of Munden Point Park.

The recreational area is in a part of the city that hardly looks like one at all—the surroundings are much closer in both miles and appearance to nearby Knotts Island, N.C. than the hustle-bustle of the Town Center, Hilltop or Oceanfront.

Here, the North Landing River cuts its sweet-tea colored path through the Pungo lowlands, surrounded by cypress trees draped

Beach Women event on Saturday, October 20.

The day-long outdoor education initiative, produced by Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation (VBPR) in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), provided instruction and insight into outdoor activities ranging from outdoor cooking to archery for women ages 16 and older.

Other events included an introduction to kayaking, fly fishing lessons, a class in wild edibles, wildlife watching, learning how to appreciate the "backyard habitat," and an introduction to hiking and backpacking. Jimmy Mootz, an event coordinator with DGIF's Outdoor Education Program, said that the inaugural event ran seamlessly.

"When I was doing the site evaluation for this place earlier in 2007, I came back and told them, 'We couldn't have designed a better place to hold one of these things,'" Mootz said of Munden Point Park's layout, much of which follows an oval road-

# Out Beach



***Large tracks of land open to the public and unique outdoor opportunities, make the Tidewater area a sporting paradise. With excellent water access throughout the area, participants took full advantage of some hands-on paddling instruction.***

with Spanish moss. Farmland, expansive lots and forests highlight the landscape instead of strip malls and condominiums.

A world away—and worth the drive for the dozens of women who participated in the first-ever Outdoor

way around the namesake point of land that juts out into the North Landing River. The educational stations were located at intervals around the oval, each of which was occupied by 10-15 women at any given time. "I can't believe I was up at 3:30 in the morning sweating the details. This has gone off without a hitch and the reason why is Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation's involvement with getting this program out into the community. They have

taken on the lion's share of responsibility."

Mootz, who works out of DGIF's headquarters in Richmond, often oversees similar state-run events catered towards the outdoor education of women—a demographic survey has shown is underserved despite heavy interest.

Mootz said that when Shawn Hopson of VBPR approached him about holding an event like the state's "Becoming an Outdoors



# oor Women



*Munden Point Park and the North Landing River made a perfect backdrop for learning the finer points of fly casting and archery lessons.*

Woman" series, which are normally held at a DGIF-funded 4H center in Appomattox County, he jumped at the idea, as post-program evaluations showed a desire for a Hampton Roads-area event.

"Our goal is to become involved with as many cities and counties as possible in holding these events,"

Mootz said. "For the local residents to get involved, we know we're going to have to take it to people, not necessarily have everyone come to us."

But Hopson, who worked at DGIF before coming to VBPR, knew that the state format—an entire weekend long event with four hour-long sessions for each station—tended to alienate a crowd with a more casual taste for the outdoors.

So Hopson drafted up a condensed version of the state-run initiative, offering participants their choice of four 1½ hour-long sessions held in one day. According to both Hopson and Mootz, the experiment immediately translated into success.

Jennifer Denham of Kempsville agreed.

"I'm originally from the Northwest, so the outdoors are a big part of everything," said Denham, who discovered the event on a VBPR poster she saw in a fitness studio. "But it's so commonplace that there's not introductory things like this, especially for women. And also, I'm new to this area, so this was a chance for me to discover some of the area's resources."

Denham's friend Michelle LaPointe, a Richmond resident who grew up in Virginia Beach and attended Tallwood High School, said that the event's format was interesting and easy to follow.

"We learned how to cook in a cardboard box, and we made a cake, which was really good and fascinating," LaPointe said about the outdoor cooking class. "That was just really cool."

Hopson said that in light of the event's apparent success, plans are in the works for a second installment of Outdoor Beach Women, this one tentatively scheduled for May.

"We're still working out the details, but things are looking good for that," said Hopson, who added that VBPR is looking to lower the participation age in order to encourage more mothers and daughters to take part, as well as offer additional educational stations. "We're definitely looking to expand this thing and improve on it, and a lot of that will be determined by the evaluations we re-

ceive from participants at the end of the day."

Mootz said he's looking forward to the next installment as well.

"These things are constantly evolving," Mootz said. "We want to try and exceed people's expectations every time out." □



*The Outdoor Beach Women event was very well received by all who attended. The Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Outdoor Education Program are currently making plans to partner together again to offer more people the opportunity to learn about their wild side and to test their outdoor skills.*

John Streit is a freelance sports journalist serving Hampton Roads and northeastern North Carolina. For feedback call: 639-4805 or [vb.beaconsports@yahoo.com](mailto:vb.beaconsports@yahoo.com).



# Mustang M



*Above: Friendship and literary connections grow together in the garden.*

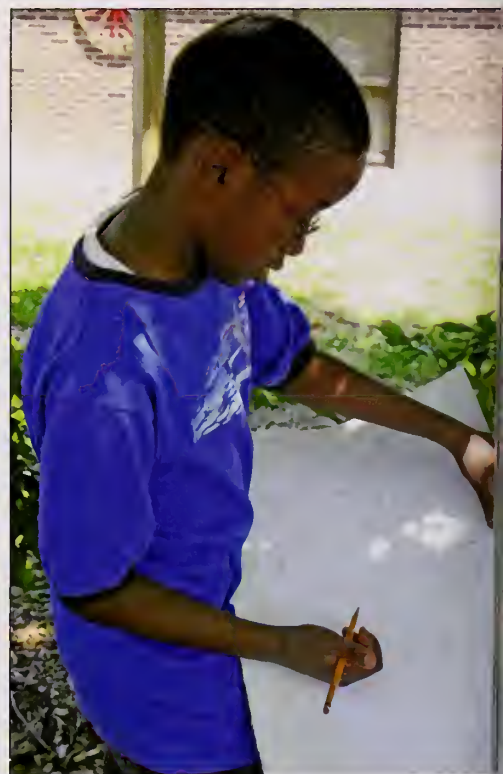
*Right: Capturing nature's shapes and textures takes concentration.*

story and photos  
by Gail Brown

Calling all parents—and friends and relatives, too! Three years ago Mount Vernon Elementary School (MVES) in York County flashed the alarm calling families and friends to school to help create a learning garden and wildlife habitat. While long the dream of former principal Jane Allen-Houk, turning dreams into reality can be a challenge. But MVES is the home of Wildfire the Mustang and several Master Gardeners are also called Mom. So, if wishes were horses, then parents (led by Master Gardener Claire Britcher) could ride into campus—garden hoses like lassos waving overhead—and turn the schoolyard into a verdant wonderland. Instantly!

But while everyone might wish things could go that easily, Mustang Meadows, a learning center comprised of small gardens and two main outdoor classrooms, is growing more like a hometown than a boom town. And while there are no horses, real ones anyway, and the garden will always be a work in progress, it's amazing what has transpired in Mount Vernon's Mustang Meadows because moms and dads heard the call, picked up their rakes, and made up their minds that there is great value to experiencing nature first-hand.

Like many things worth working for, success did not come easily, and in the beginning Mount Vernon's schoolyard garden appeared to





# eadowS

Virginia  
Naturally

*Parents and friends are helping Mount Vernon Elementary School create more than just wild spaces for the students.*

sprout more problems than plants. Delays in the school's roofing project (postponed in 2005 and again in 2006) played havoc with plans to create several small gardens designed to border the building, an area deemed off-limits for safety reasons.

"The key," says volunteer Master Gardener Jody Turner, "is to have a complete plan from the start, but start small. And stay flexible." That advice was tested immediately as The Chuck Wagon Vegetable Garden, The Medicine Hat Herb Garden (a collection of herbs which will grow in poor soil), and The ABC Corral (groupings

of plants to be labeled with student-decorated wooden letters) had to be put on hold as their planned location fell within the off-limit area.

But serendipity was in the air that fall as the York County Master Gardeners (under the auspices of the Virginia Cooperative Extension of York County and its 4-H Youth Programs) already had plans to start a 4-H Junior Master Gardener Program at Mount Vernon and two other elementary schools. The Junior Master Gardener clubs ([www.jmgkids.com](http://www.jmgkids.com)) are led by trained volunteers dedicated to providing children with experi-



**Above:** Responsibility for keeping the bird feeders full is a privilege.



ences in horticulture that promote leadership skills, a love of nature, and a dedication to preserving our natural resources.

At the same time the kids were moving forward with their projects, Britcher's newly formed Leadership Team of Master Gardeners (and those studying for endorsement) continued to recruit parents. Classes such as the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' WILD School Sites, Project Wet, Project Wild, and Project Learning Tree were attended by Master Gardeners and others wanting to learn how they could help make this dream a reality.

**Left:** This teepee in the Native American Celebration Garden will support the Three Sisters: corn, beans and squash.



## Schoolyard Habitats As Outdoor Classrooms

Regional Schoolyard Habitat workshops are offered by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for teachers, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and others. Workshops focus on:

How to improve a wildlife habitat.

How to plan an Outdoor Classroom.

How to develop objectives that connect habitat features with the Virginia Standards of Learning.

For more information about setting up a Schoolyard Habitat Workshop in your area, call: Carol A. Heiser, Habitat Education Coordinator (DGIF), (804) 367-6989 or [Carol.Heiser@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:Carol.Heiser@dgif.virginia.gov)



*Above: This "barn," donated by the PTA, keeps tools and reference materials handy.*



*Above: Teamwork and muscle help get the job done.*

Help also came that fall when Mount Vernon's generous PTA donated \$2,000 (as they have each year since) and numerous volunteer hours. Several family workdays have been held and, among other accom-

plishments, a dwarf holly hedge was planted across the front of the garden as well as hedges of camellias around the garden's two classrooms. When grown, the holly hedge will help provide security and muffle street noises; the camellias will provide interior walls so that several classrooms can use the garden simultaneously. Par-

ents even created two additional gardens, The Prairie and The Reading Roundup (think log benches around a campfire of orange, red and yellow flowers).

Providing access for the entire population is an ongoing consideration, and parents Phil Jones, Mic Platt, and others continue to work to make the different areas of the gardens accessible to all. Jones added metal grips to the sides of two raised flower beds, creating a design that allows students with disabilities to pull themselves up to a sitting or standing position to work at the beds. Platt, now the Project Manager, built a ramp to the shed where tools and educational materials are stored. He is currently installing brick landings around two raised beds, which will make it easier to navigate around the beds on crutches or in wheelchairs. "Planning ahead and having time to think things out, getting plenty of help, and letting everyone know what you're doing makes all the difference," said Jones.

While kids grow their green thumbs outside, attention is also focused on growing a literary connection inside in the school library. Named Wildfire's Book Nook by student vote, this collection of books and reference materials serves as a teacher/student center for further study. Linking the gardens with printed materials ensures academic





ference in their school and their community.

As Mustang Meadows enters its fourth year, it's getting harder and harder to remember a time when the kids at Mount Vernon didn't have this natural habitat area to learn in and enjoy. In the words of Principal Barbara Wood, "Mustang Meadows is an extension of Mount Vernon Elementary School, which brings together the parents, students, staff and community to better appreciate plants, wildlife and the rewards of working together to produce a beautiful place to work and learn."

Somewhere kids are looking out a schoolroom window, wishing they could dig in the dirt and check out the worms. And somewhere other parents wish their kids had an outdoor classroom where conservation is learned by testing soil and watching nature unfold her secrets. Now, where'd you say you left that rake? □

*Gail Brown is a retired principal for Chesterfield County Public Schools. She is a lifelong learner and educator, and her teaching and administrative experiences in grades K-12 have taught her that project-based environmental programs teach science standards, promote core values, and provide exciting educational experiences for the entire community.*



**Above:** The York County Beautification Committee funds the recycling program and donated this Liberty elm tree.



**Top:** Smiles grow in the garden, too.

**Above:** By working together students build a "campfire" of red, yellow and orange plants in the Reading Roundup classroom.

goals are met and that the gardens are seen as learning environments, in addition to beautiful places to visit.

As time passes opportunities become available for teachers and students alike at MVES. Two new 4-H clubs, The Early Birds, a before-school program in place since 2005, and The Schoolyard Scouts, an after-school club begun this fall, provide time for students to work together as leaders in the school's efforts to conserve our natural resources. Currently both groups are working on decorating recycling bins for the office and every classroom. Motivation is high and these kids are making a real dif-





# Camping with

*Camping is a wonderful  
outdoors adventure  
the entire family  
can enjoy.*

story and photos  
by Marc N. McGlade

**A**re you looking for an outdoors adventure the entire family can enjoy? Have you considered a family camping trip? Camping is a bonding experience for all ages, is a great way to introduce youngsters to nature, and is a wonderful way to relax and enjoy the great outdoors.

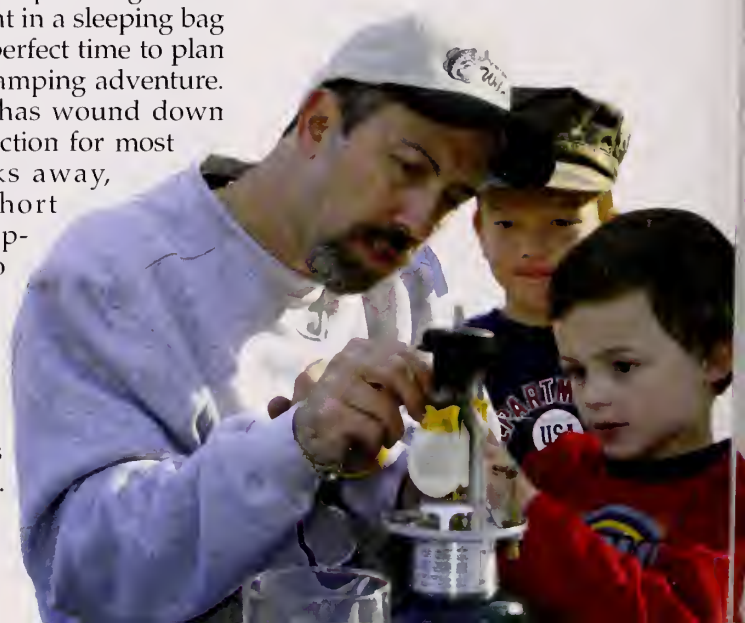
Furthermore, camping can be just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to outdoors opportunities. While camping and setting up a

home base, families can canoe, fish, hunt, hike, bike and more at many of the campgrounds across America. Fortunately, the Commonwealth is chock-full of such opportunities.

While the month of February doesn't conjure up thoughts of spending the night in a sleeping bag outside, it is the perfect time to plan for your family camping adventure. Hunting season has wound down and hot fishing action for most species is weeks away, making this short month a most opportune time to get the camping ducks in a row.

Virginia is blessed with a plethora of camping options across its 450-mile width.

From camping in the sand at the beach to pitching a tent in the Blue Ridge Mountains or setting up camp at one of Virginia's 34 state parks, the Old Dominion's camping is as diverse as its fishing, rivers, hunting and other outdoors adventures.







*Left: When camping at Virginia's 34 state parks, visitors can participate in numerous outdoor activities. Above: The author's dog, Bailey, couldn't be happier than camping with the family. Have plenty of fresh water, toys and treats to keep pets happy.*



*Lower left and above: It's important to have children lend a helping hand when camping. Give children chores to do when camping and they feel valued. It can also be a good learning experience, especially when it comes to building a fire, setting up a tent, or in the fine art of tying on mantels to an old, reliable gas lantern.*

# Kids

## The Essentials

Some experienced campers bring everything but the kitchen sink when they go camping. When car-camping—driving to a campground and parking the car in proximity to where the tent is pitched—that's fine; however, when hiking long distances, a rookie mistake is to bring too much gear. A visit to the chiropractor or orthopedic surgeon will be the resulting activity for the so-called he-man who puts a lot of weight upon his shoulders as he navigates the switchbacks on the trail.

Stationary camping is usually easier for families, particularly those with young children. Parking the vehicle near the campsite allows families to bring quite a bit of modern-day conveniences to make the stay more comfortable. Many of today's campsites have electrical hook-ups, which

makes for an easy transition for those not accustomed to "roughing it." This is a good way to start youngsters in what will hopefully become a lifelong desire to be outdoors.

Camping lists abound on the Internet, and a simple search will return more hits than a person can imagine. There are plenty of items that one family may deem essential, but another family might view as over the top. While some lists look exhausting, these items are indeed helpful and worth considering when camping with the family (refer to the sidebar on page 26). The last thing anyone on a camping trip wants to hear is someone whining because they don't have item A or B. Plan and prepare ahead and the entire family will likely want to camp again and again.

## Activities for the Entire Family

It is well known that young children have short attention spans. For that reason, it is important when introducing them to an outdoors activity to make it as fun and engaging as possible.



## Camping Must-Have Items

- Tent and tent liners (one for inside the tent to protect the floor and one underneath the tent to prevent moisture)
- Sleeping bags, bed rolls and blankets
- Lanterns and batteries
- Lantern fuel and mantels
- Food, drinks and bottled water
- Cooler and ice
- Flashlights and batteries
- Hatchet and hammer
- Medicine or vitamins
- First aid kit
- Dry supply bags
- Dish rags and dishwashing soap
- Firearms and ammunition (if permitted)
- Knives
- Toilet paper
- Spare clothes
- Rake
- Waterproof matches
- Cast-iron frying pan
- Trash bags
- Plastic cutlery
- Plates
- Cups
- Paper towels

## Camping Nice-to-Have Items

- Air mattress and pump
- Binoculars
- Radio and batteries
- Rods/reels and tackle boxes
- Card table
- Shovel
- Electrical extension cord
- Life jackets
- Canoe
- Lawn chairs
- Newspaper (to aid in starting a fire)
- Firewood
- Pillows
- Bed sheets
- Corn broom or dustpan and brush (for inside the tent)
- Portable stove or small charcoal grill
- Charcoal and lighter fluid
- Coffee and coffee pot



*A portable grill can bring the conveniences of home to the campground and help to feed a hungry family. Nothing builds an appetite like a few days in the outdoors, surrounded with new sights and sounds and lots of fresh air.*

There are a number of activities that kids and adults can participate in to keep everyone enthralled—particularly at Virginia's state parks. Many state parks or other camping locations are strategically positioned near a lake, reservoir or river. A natural fit is to couple fishing with camping. In kid-speak, that goes together like peanut butter and jelly. Fresh-caught fish cooked over a campfire is a sure bet to instill the call of nature to children, and is a great way for adults to reconnect as well.

Many children are intrigued by the catch-clean-eat sequence with fish. Teaching them the proper way to clean and dress fish is a worthwhile lesson. Moreover, it's hard to beat the taste of fresh fish—culinary wise—in the cast-iron skillet.

Hiking trails ranging from beginner to advanced levels abound throughout the Old Dominion. An easy trail is obviously a wise choice for young kids. Older or more experienced children may find the intermediate trails to be more to their liking.

Biking trails are also plentiful, and for families that enjoy biking, this is certainly a lot of fun. Trails can be challenging and are usually very scenic.

*Tents with a hinged door make entry and exit a lot easier for active youngsters and older adults.*

Don't forget easy-to-do activities, such as turning over rocks or dead logs (best if an adult searches the area first for snakes), digging for worms or searching for critters that children would find fascinating. Wildlife watching while camping is also an enjoyable activity. Using binoculars to glass the landscape with a child will result in many questions from the youngster.

At the evening campfire, a must-do activity is whittling a stick and making s'mores. The same stick can be used to roast hot dogs, which is usually another fan favorite of youngsters.

Assign chores to children to help them feel valued. Send them out to collect kindling or carry firewood to within safe range of the firepit. Perhaps let them rake the area where the





tent will be pitched. Put them on point to assist with staking the floor of the tent or the rain fly to the ground. Anything tangible that signals to their brain, "Hey, I did that!" will go a long way to helping kids feel appreciated and involved.

This past September, my family and our friends, the Murphys, camped at Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield County, located 20 miles from downtown Richmond. I solicited the help of my son, Justin, to fetch firewood and twigs for the fire. He and his friends Ryan and Mason turned it into a contest, seeing who



among the three of them could bring the most sticks and logs to the fire ring the fastest.

Bring enough flashlights for everyone, especially kids. The power they feel isn't just from the power source in the light. A flashlight in hand means to a child that they are in control of their destiny and have a purpose. Toting a flashlight sounds like a small thing, but to a youngster it is huge. Besides, how else will they search for secret stuff or play cards under the sleeping bag after mom and dad send them to bed if they don't have a light source?

## Pick Good Weather

Picking good weather is paramount to becoming a camping fan. When people are comfortable, dry, not too hot or cold, things naturally go better. If the weather forecast calls for steady rain or blistering temperatures, it is best to reschedule. Kids have a memory like an elephant, so do what you can to reinforce a fond memory.

If dogs are part of your family, plan to bring them if permitted by the campground. They are wonderful companions on camping trips and make the excursion even better for kids. Again, keep in mind the weather for four-legged participants.

## Where Camping Begins

There are many fine companies that produce and sell quality camping gear, such as Cabela's, Dick's Sporting Goods, Gander Mountain, Bass Pro Shops and other locally owned sporting goods stores, but no camping trip would be complete without mentioning the Coleman company. For almost 100 years the Wichita, Kansas company, which bares the name of its founder, W.C. Coleman, has been changing the way people enjoy the outdoors.

My days of camping as a single man significantly changed with the addition of a wife, son and yellow Lab. I quickly realized it was time for a serious tent upgrade from my small, A-frame tent that served me well during my riverfront camping trips in the past.

After conducting some research and understanding the needs of my family, we opted for the Coleman Evanston Tent, a one-room, 14-foot by 12-foot family-style tent. This sizeable family tent easily held our gear, an air mattress, the three of us and our beloved dog, Bailey. Many of the

tents we looked at had weather proofing, which is guaranteed to keep campers in the dry. That's imperative for family camping. There might not be anything worse than being wet or cold while camping. So no matter what tent you decide to purchase insist on one that will keep you dry.

One of the other features that we found important is a hinged door system. Where the front door opens and closes easily, or it can be zipped into place. We like using the hinged door instead of messing around with the zipper—a very nice feature when camping with 5-year-olds, as they are in and out of the tent like there's no tomorrow.

We were also looking for a tent that will sleep eight, but stuffing eight people in the tent with gear would be a fiasco. So a tent designed with a high center height was very important for a 6-footer like me. This was also my wife Karen's favorite feature.

Other features that we were looking for included built-in pockets for storage, the ability to access gear or adjust ventilation, hooks that snap securely to tent poles and shock-corded poles for easy and quick setup. Karen, Justin and I wanted a tent that we could setup in approximately 15 minutes from beginning to end the first time out.

Another important feature was a full rain fly, that would extend well in front of the entry door to form a spacious vestibule with privacy wings on





each side, providing additional wind and sun block.

During our camping weekend to Pocahontas State Park, we tried out a battery-powered lantern that is perfect for inside the tent, along with other camping gear that included stoves, coolers, sleeping bags, air mattresses, chairs, flashlights, portable heaters, backpacks, cookware and more. Our list of camping gear grew quickly, but each item helped to make our camping experience that much more enjoyable.

## Safety First

When camping with kids, it's important to stress safety first. Never leave a fire unattended. When leaving for a hike, bike ride or fishing excursion, ensure that the fire is completely extinguished. We all have a responsibility to uphold and leading by example is most important to youngsters.

Always stress the importance of leaving the outdoors free of litter. Bring trash bags to collect all of the camping trash, and any other garbage that is found. Kids can make a game of it, competing against one another to see who can find and bag the most trash.

## Reconnecting with Nature

With so many kids today locked onto television, video games and indoor activities, now is the time to plan a family camping trip to get them outdoors and in touch with nature. As for adults, there's a certain romance to camping. Besides the distinct smell of burnt eyebrows from a husband lighting the lantern or fire, taking a stroll through the woods and reconnecting the entire family with one another without life's interruptions is wonderful.

If time outdoors with the family is your thing—and it likely is if you're a regular reader of *Virginia Wildlife*—then plan a camping trip and get the entire family into the action. Virginia's climate is conducive to spring, summer and fall camping, and our many mild winter days make it a joy to be in the woods, too.



Choose the right environment, which is easy to do in Virginia, and you might just have a fellow camper for life! □

*Marc N. McGlade is a writer and photographer from Midlothian. Marc enjoys camping with his 6-year-old son, Justin, wife, Karen, and yellow Lab, Bailey.*

## For More Information

- For information about wildlife and wildlife watching, contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in Richmond at (804) 367-1000, or go online at [www.HuntFishVA.com](http://www.HuntFishVA.com).

***There are plenty of activities to keep the entire family satisfied at Virginia's State Parks.***

- To browse the camping and outdoor gear that has made Coleman a household name, visit [www.coleman.com](http://www.coleman.com) or call the consumer service line at (800) 835-3278.
- Contact Virginia State Parks, at [www.dcr.virginia.gov/state\\_parks](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks). To learn about Virginia state park offerings and overnight accommodations, call (800) 933-PARK or e-mail [resvs@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:resvs@dcr.virginia.gov).





# Journal

## 2008 Outdoor Calendar of Events

**February 15-18:** *Great Backyard Bird Count*, [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)

**April 5:** *Kid's Day Trout Fishing*, Graves Mountain Lodge. Starts 9:00 a.m. For more information, call 540-923-4231. □

## Walleye Tagging Study Slated for 2008

The Department will be tagging walleyes at several locations across the Commonwealth this spring to learn more about angler catch rates and harvest. Tagging is planned for Lake Whitehurst, Leesville Lake, Hungry Mother Lake, South Holston Reservoir, Lake Brittle and the New River.

Anglers who catch a tagged fish

plastic attachment with scissors or a knife. The fish can then be released or harvested (minimum length limits apply at South Holston Reservoir and the New River). Successful anglers can return the tag and catch information to the address printed on the tag. Important catch data include the contact information of the angler and the answers to a few simple questions. What were the date, time and general location of the catch? Was the fish harvested or released? Were you fishing for walleyes? Finally, did you catch other walleyes?

The information gathered from successful anglers will help biologists make important decisions about managing walleye fisheries. This tagging study is part of the ongoing efforts to improve walleye fishing opportunities in Virginia. □

## Great Backyard Bird Count

The 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will be held during President's Day weekend, February 15-18, 2008. Anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

"It's fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment," says Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part

wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest numbers of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. They then enter their tallies on the GBBC Web site [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The Web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203



checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species.

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flights, sounds, and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. □



and return the tag will receive a cash reward. The tag will be located near the fish's dorsal fin. Anglers can remove the tag by cutting through the





## Is A Career in Wildlife Law Enforcement For You?

Individuals who are interested in a law enforcement career could easily find themselves migrating into the field of natural resources where exciting opportunities await them as Conservation Police Officers. Once known as Game Wardens, these public safety professionals dedicate their lives to the protection of our natural resources by enforcing laws and regulations that regulate the activities of sportsmen and women who participate in outdoor recreation. Before pursuing this career path, candidates should consider both the attraction of working outdoors as well as the inherent dangers of the profession. If you have the ability to rise to such demands, then you may very well have what it takes to become a Virginia Conservation Police Officer!

### Qualifications

Applicants for the position of Conservation Police Officer must possess a high-school diploma or GED equivalent and be at least 21 years of age by the date of hire. Experience that provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities is essential. Additionally, applicants must have a safe driving history and possess or be eligible for a valid Virginia driver's license. Medical (including hearing and vision testing), psychological and polygraph examinations will be conducted as part of the selection process. Successful applicants will also un-

dergo a background investigation that will include educational achievements, prior work experience, character and reputation, credit history and a criminal history check.

Additionally, candidates must be willing to:

- travel to complete testing and screening at your own expense
- complete a swimming and physical agility assessment
- relocate within the area of assignment
- work days, nights, weekends and holidays
- travel overnight as assigned

After attending the 29-week Basic Law Enforcement Academy, newly sworn officers will undergo a 15-week field training program under the direction of a Field Training Officer. Only after this extensive training does the new officer earn the title of Virginia Conservation Police Officer.

For more information about becoming a Virginia Conservation Police Officer visit our Web site at [www.dgiv.virginia.gov](http://www.dgiv.virginia.gov).

Virginia Department of Game  
and Inland Fisheries  
P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23230-1104  
804-367-DGIF (3443)  
An Equal Opportunity Employer



## Outdoor Kids

In today's fast paced, high-tech world the reality is quickly setting in that children are losing touch with the natural world around them. Instead of enjoying what nature has to offer they are spending countless hours watching television, playing video games, and wasting away in a world of virtual reality.

So, *Virginia Wildlife* decided to start a new photo gallery featuring kids and young adults enjoying time in the outdoors. We would like to encourage you to send us photographs of your kids in the outdoors, especially those who enjoy hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, camping, birding or just spending time getting in tune with nature.

Send us one or more digital photographs on a CD or good quality color prints. Please include contact information (address, phone number, and email), the names of those pictured, along with a brief description of the event, such as location and date taken. We also require that you give written permission to publish the photograph in an upcoming issue



of *Virginia Wildlife* or in other department publications. Photographs will not be returned. Please remember: **Photos will not be used unless written permission is received.**

Send your photographs to: Outdoor Kids, Virginia Wildlife, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Also, take just a minute to visit the Department's Web and discover a wealth of angling, hunting and outdoor information, along with tips and places to go. While you're there sign up to receive the free VDGIF Outdoor Report, which includes a bi-weekly, statewide fishing report.

Help make a difference in the lives of those who will become the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts. Take a kid outdoors. □



***Way to go Seth Whitehurst for harvesting this impressive 145 pound, 8-point buck right after Thanksgiving. Seth was hunting with his dad, Mark, near Lovettsville and was using a single shot .243 when he made a perfect shot at 80 yards. Seth said that after downing the deer his dad rushed over and gave him a big hug. Seth also thanked his dad for helping to bring the deer within safe shooting range by grunting him in. Mark noted that after all the excitement Seth said, "Since I got an 8-point at 8-years-old does that mean I'll get a 9-pointer next year? Seth took and passed his Hunter Safety course last year as a 7-year-old and has since taken three other nice deer. Seth not only loves to hunt, but is also an outstanding student, athlete and Cub Scout.***

***Director's Column continued from page 2***

wildlife professionals today. Never in the history of the profession of wildlife management has the concern been so great related to well-intended and not so well-intended people moving wildlife.

The interstate trade in wildlife is significant, driven by any number of markets for the animals. This Department has taken a hard line on the illegal possession and movement of wildlife, specifically due to the disease concerns. This concern was virtually unheard of in the "old" Virginia. So far, as indicated by frequent monitoring, none of the wildlife diseases so problematic in other states have been found in Virginia. We certainly will continue to do all we can to keep it that way.

Along these same proactive lines, the Department has launched a study regarding the use of hounds in certain types of hunting in Virginia. Hunting with hounds is a long and time-honored tradition in many states, but probably nowhere any stronger than Virginia. Our interest, as the Agency charged with matters related to hunting, is to protect this heritage and the role it plays in managing wildlife. As with all hunters, hunters who work with hounds are passionate about wildlife, about hunting in general and in particular about their love for and use of dogs in pursuing their sport. No one recognizes and appreciates that more than we at the Department.

Issues related to hunting with hounds that we are hearing about today were largely unheard of in a more rural Virginia. Our approach in this study is to involve stakeholders and, because the face of Virginia has changed, the list of stakeholders is larger and more diverse than it may have been in 1916. Hunters who use dogs, other hunters, private landowners, corporate landowners, rural homeowners, local government officials, law enforcement, wildlife managers and of course many other groups who enjoy wildlife are all important to this process. By participation in local focus groups, all these stakeholders can have the input we feel is so important to getting the full perspective.

It is worth noting that this is the same approach we took in developing long-term management plans for deer and bear. In a simplified description of this process, we asked stakeholders at the local level what they thought the management philosophy should be regarding regional populations of these species. The results of that process are now paying dividends in the management decisions we make.

In managing Virginia's wildlife for all to enjoy, we must be diligent in staying on top of threats to these invaluable resources. We must also be in tune with what our citizens want from these resources and with their expectations of those who use these resources. Some folks are uncomfortable with the hunting with hounds study process but clearly the information gained in the study will prove invaluable. Just as hunting not only survived but thrived after the significant changes in the early 1900s, we feel it can and will continue to do so as we face today's challenges.

This is not about abandoning our heritage related to wildlife resources and hunting. Rather, it is all about protecting them in an ever changing environment. □



***Congratulations to Griffin (left) and twin brother Richmond McDaniel for their impressive catch of twin blue catfish. The 9-year-old brothers were on a family fishing trip on November 11, 2007, at Dutch Gap on the James River with their father, W. Richmond McDaniel, grandfather, Charles G. McDaniel and their grandmother, Mary R. McDaniel, who took the time to send us this wonderful picture. The twins not only hooked their fish at the same time, but were also using identical rods, reels and bait. When they finally landed the twin blue catfish they both weighed in around 45 pounds each. Talk about doubling your fun!***



# On The Water

by Jim Crosby



## Winter Float Planning!

**F**loat planning begins before you even consider a Float Plan. Float planning is the plan you lay out before considering a specific cruise. The Float Plan is a specific cruise plan you leave with a dependable person who will report you as "overdue" if you don't check back within the deadline.

Float planning is your plan to navigate safely, maintain your vessel in good operating order and handle emergencies should they arise.

Let's take a real case scenario. While facing the challenge of bringing a 42-foot motor vessel down the Chesapeake Bay from Kent Island, Md. to Urbanna, Va., my float planning began weeks before boarding the vessel to get underway.

I started off with a vinyl, loose-leaf notebook and plastic sheet protectors that offer some protection in a wet environment.

I placed in it all the data and information I wanted at the helm during the trip. The very first page contained the vessel data and specifications. Such things as length, beam, draft, bridge clearance, weight, fuel capacity, engine horsepower, cruise speed, fuel consumption per hour at cruise speed, Coast Guard Documentation Number, hull identification number, make and model of vessel, and visual description of vessel.

The second page is the Pre-Underway Check List—the sequence of events and checks that must be completed in order before moving out of the slip. The length of this checklist is dictated by the size of the vessel and the number of systems onboard. A checklist insures you don't launch your vessel with the hull drain plug out or leave the dock with the AC power cord still plugged in. A checklist doesn't leave the discovery of broken equipment until your first need of its services or a cold engine that dies just as you attempt to counteract a drift into

someone else's precious property. This checklist must include a check of all of the personal protection gear and the vessel's safety equipment to insure nothing is left ashore or out of service. This checklist must begin with a crew (guest) briefing on the plan of the day, location and use of all safety equipment, rules about wearing your life jacket (PFD) when on deck while underway, and the assignment of a PFD to each person onboard (POB) who must put it on and adjust straps to fit their physique. Make each POB aware that maintaining a sharp lookout includes everyone and each POB has a responsibility for the safety of everyone else. Crew briefing must also include a discussion of man-overboard-drills and the sequence of actions that must be taken in recovery. Making passengers aware of their duties and responsibilities makes them feel more a part of the crew and goes a long way toward easing any uneasiness or apprehension.

The next page is my "Underway Check List." The first line states, "When all systems seem to be functioning perfectly is not the time to become complacent about safety checks." The list includes checks on course and speed, maintaining a constant lookout, periodic checks of the bilge, engine room, and electrical systems. If water or oil is collecting in the bilge, the earlier you find it, the better your chances of correcting the problem before it becomes an emergency. There are no "guests" aboard my vessel.

The next check list is my "Pre-Docking Check List." This serves to make sure you don't dock under a shed and wipe out everything protruding above the cabin top. That all persons onboard have assumed their positions to fend off with fenders and boat poles, that dock lines are ready to be deployed, and that no one tries to transmit on the ship's radio after the antennas have been lowered. A brief

review of the checklist insures nothing is forgotten and that goes a long way toward eliminating breakage, accidents and personal injury.

My notebook also contains a diagram of the marina we are departing and the marina we will be docking in, as well as a list of all the navigation aids we will be using as waypoints, which amounts to our plotted course.

Kept at the helm, my notebook is ready to reference as data is required, as a matter of routine or in an emergency—especially in an emergency.

The final checklist is the "Securing the Vessel Check List." While this one should be very obvious, it does require some thought and planning to insure you don't leave equipment turned on that should be turned off and vice versa when you leave her unattended. The first thing to shut down, if you have one onboard, is the radar. It transmits radio frequency energy and can cause false readings to other vessels navigating in the vicinity.

My notebook also includes color charts of the navigation aids to help identify the lesser used ones, navigation rules for passing situations, vessel and bridge navigation lighting, sound signals, channels and their use for the VHF FM marine radio and a cue card for making an emergency broadcast.

The last items in my notebook include navigation instruments for dead reckoning navigation in case all the electronic navigation equipment fails or is absent. And lastly, the prudent mariner will never leave port without all the necessary marine charts of the operating area.

These are just a few thoughts for your contemplation during winter lay-up! □

Share your questions, concerns or suggestions with me at: [jecrosby@comcast.net](mailto:jecrosby@comcast.net).



# RECIPES

by Joan Cone

## Oysters at Risk

**F**ebruary may be a short, dark and cold month, but it does have some good things about it. We have Valentine's Day, plus two of our greatest presidents, Washington and Lincoln, were born in February. Our first president gives us an excuse to make sour cherry recipes.

The water, now, in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries is cold, and oysters are at their best. Current oyster harvests are approximately 8 percent of the harvest highs recorded in the 1950s. Declines are due to over harvest, disease, pollution and loss of oyster reef habitat. Oysters help filter Bay water, improving its quality, and oyster reefs provide important habitat for Bay creatures.

### Menu

*Oyster Casserole*

*Oysters Benedict*  
(For brunch)

*Slaw with Collards*

*Cherry Upside-Down Cake*

### **Oyster Casserole** (For microwave)

- 2 cups oysters and liquor
- ½ cup butter
- 1½ cups broken saltine crackers
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Pepper to taste
- Dash of mace
- ¼ cup sherry

Melt butter in a 1 quart glass casserole and blend in crackers, cheese, pepper and mace. Mix oyster liquor and sherry in a bowl. In a 10 x 6-inch baking dish spread a layer of cracker crumb mixture, oysters, crumbs, oysters, ending with cracker crumbs. Pour oyster liquor/sherry mixture over casserole, scraping sides of dish to let liquid blend around sides. Cook, uncovered, in microwave on HIGH for 5 minutes. Mix lightly and cook an additional 2 minutes until edges curl and mixture is hot throughout. Makes 4 servings.

### **Oysters Benedict** (For brunch)

- 4 thin slices Virginia country ham
- Butter
- 2 English muffins, halved and toasted
- 12 oysters, about ½ pint
- Easy Hollandaise Sauce

In skillet, sauté ham lightly in butter. Remove and place a ham slice on each muffin half. Sauté oysters in

same pan just until edges curl. Place oysters on top of ham. Cover with warm Hollandaise Sauce. Makes 4 servings.

### **Easy Hollandaise Sauce**

- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 4 tablespoons butter

In a small saucepan, stir egg with fresh lemon juice. After mixing well, place over moderate heat. Add butter and stir constantly. As butter melts, sauce thickens.

### **Slaw With Collards**

- 6 collard leaves, cut into small, thin strips
- ½ head cabbage, shredded
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons black seedy mustard
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. Makes 4 servings.

### **Cherry Upside-Down Cake**

- 1 cup butter or margarine, divided
- 2 cups sugar, divided
- 1 can (14 to 16 ounces) pitted sour cherries, drained
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 2 eggs
- 2½ cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅔ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Melt ⅓ cup butter in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet. Spread ½ cup sugar evenly over butter and continue cooking over low heat until sugar is dissolved. Arrange cherries and chopped pecans in skillet. Remove from heat and set aside. Cream remaining ⅔ cup butter. Gradually add remaining 1½ cups sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Combine flour, baking powder and salt. Stir well and add to creamed mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Stir in vanilla. Spread batter evenly over cherries and pecans in skillet. Bake in a preheated 350° F. oven for 50 minutes or until cake tests done. Cool in skillet for 10 minutes. Invert cake onto a plate. Cool cake completely and top with whipped cream or whipped topping, if desired. Yields one 10-inch cake. □



# Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

## What is Acceptable Digital Manipulation?

**"I**s that a "real" photograph or was it manipulated in PhotoShop?" If you haven't said those words yourself, surely you've thought them, right? With the digital age, the authenticity of photographs has been questioned more and more. There have even been a few cases where news photographers were fired for trying to pass off manipulated images as what really happened! What it all comes down to though is what you mean by manipulation, the situation you are shooting, and how you represent the photographs.

Ansel Adams is considered one of the greatest landscape photographers, but did you know that he "manipulated" most of his photographs? In manipulation here, I mean he used well-honed dark room skills to dodge and burn his hand printed photographs. He probably adjusted exposure, color corrected (though he shot mostly black & white), and even spotted his prints for dust. All of those things are well-accepted practices for making prints from negatives or slides. Though not many of us make our own prints from negatives today, I believe that folks will still agree that dodging, burning, exposure, color correction, and spotting for dust are accepted manipulative practices in today's digital world.

With that said, what isn't acceptable? When a photographer takes a photograph and dramatically changes it in some fashion to become a totally different photograph then these changes might be considered unacceptable manipulation. Moving objects, changing the color, or getting rid of a person, place, or thing or even adding other elements to the photograph can be considered unacceptable manipulation. Or can it?

I think it really depends on the situation. As a news, documentary or nature photographer, it is your job to document what happens in front of

you. This type of "true" photography should never be manipulated in any way besides the standard accepted practices of dodging, burning, etc. But, if you are a photographer illustrating a story where you need to manipulate the scene, subjects or the photographs, then that's acceptable. If you caption it correctly calling the photograph a "photo illustration" or an "image taken under controlled conditions."

From the airbrushing of *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit models to ads showing polar bears hanging out with penguins (penguins and polar bears live in opposite poles of one another), photo manipulation has been going on for years. But, with the age of digital photography and more folks having access to digital manip-

ulation technology, a mistrust in the truth of photographic images has begun to work its way into the mindset of photographers world wide. The way I look at it is, as long as you are truthful about your photographs and the digital manipulation of them, have fun and do whatever you want!

You are invited to submit one of your best images to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, (4010 West Broad Street), Richmond, VA, 23230-1104. Send original slides, high quality prints, or high res jpeg files on disk and include a self addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where the image was captured, what camera, film and settings you used. I hope to see your image as our next, "Image of the Month!"

### Image of the Month



*"Have you ever seen the rare and elusive Deer Bird? This is a male chowing down at a corn filled bird feeder. What, you don't believe me? Well, you're right! Danville resident, Joseph Carter Richardson III, created this hilarious, digitally manipulated photograph in Adobe Photoshop and submitted it to "Image of the Month." Funny, isn't it? This obvious use of digital manipulation was the inspiration for this column. Thank you J.C!"*



# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE OUTDOOR CATALOG

## 2007 Limited Edition Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

Our 2007 Collector's knife has been customized by Buck Knives. This classic model 110 folding knife is 8 1/2" long when fully opened and has a distinctive, natural woodgrain handle with gold lettering. Each knife is individually serial numbered and has a mirror polished blade engraved with a fox. Our custom knife comes in a solid cherry box with a collage of foxes engraved on the box cover.



Item #VW 407

\$90.00 each (plus \$7.25 S&H)



## 2006 Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

This year's knife has been customized for us by Buck Knives. Each knife is individually serial numbered, and comes with a distinctive rosewood handle and gold lettering. This year's knife also includes two white-tailed deer etched on the blade. This custom knife not only comes with a leather sheath, but also a custom made solid, cherry box with a decorative wildlife scene engraved on the cover.

Item #VW-406

\$85.00 each



## 2005 Virginia Wildlife Collector's Knife

This year's knife has been customized for us by Buck Knives and has a cut out blade of a hunter and his dog. Each knife is individually serial numbered and comes with a distinctive rosewood handle and gold lettering. This custom knife comes in a decorative solid cherry box with a hunting scene engraved on the cover.

Item #VW-405

\$75.00 each

To Order Visit the Department's Web Site at:  
[www.HuntFishVA.com](http://www.HuntFishVA.com) or call (804) 367-2569  
Please allow 3 to 4 weeks for delivery.



## Virginia Nongame Wildlife Program

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